

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 118015

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ORIGIN EA-04

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /005 R

66611

DRAFTED BY: EA/PRCM:NBGUENTHER

APPROVED BY: EA/PRCM:TSBROOKS

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R 051735Z JUN 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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FOLLOWING REPEAT CONAKRY 0766 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
ABIDJAN DAKAR LISBON PARIS MOSCOW PEKING CINCLANT
23 MAY.

QUOTE

S E C R E T CONAKRY 0766

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PFOR MARR GV CH UR

SUBJECT : CHINESE VIEWS ON SOVIET INTERESTS IN GUINEA

REF: CONAKRY 0609 (NOTAL)

1. DURING LONG CONVERSATION WITH ME MAY 23, CHINESE AMBASSADOR
HAN KE-HUA, DEAN OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS, MADE FOLLOWING REMARKS
CONCERNING SOVIET AIMS AND ACTIVITIES WHICH SEEMED OF PARTICULAR INTEREST:

A. SOVIETS ARE INTERESTED IN GUINEA FOR TWO REASONS:
FIRST, TO SUPPORT MILITARY OBJECTIVES; SECOND, TO OBTAIN
MINERALS.

B. IN MILITARY AREA SOVIETS HAVE INCREASINGLY STRENGTHENED
THEIR POSITION. SOVIET MILITARY INTEREST IN GUINEA DATES
BACK MANY YEARS. IN 1969 WHEN AMBASSADOR HAN ARRIVED IN
CONAKRY HE FOUND HERE A SOVIET MILITARY DELEGATION HEADED BY
A GENERAL. A FEW MONTHS LATER, REPORTEDLY AT GUINEAN REQUEST,

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PAGE 02 STATE 118015

DELEGATION LEFT. AFTER THAT, SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE AND

ACTIVITIES IN GUINEA DECREASED SHARPLY. AT TIME OF 1970 PORTUGUESE-LED INVASION THERE WERE NO SOVIET MILITARY PERSONNEL PLAYING IMPORTANT ROLE IN ANY PART OF GUINEAN MILITARY. HOWEVER, FOLLOWING INVASION GUINEA'S FEARS OF FURTHER ATTACKS LED IT TO APPEAL FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE WHICH SOVIETS READILY AGREED PROVIDE. CONSEQUENTLY, BEGINNING LATE 1971 SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE AND ACTIVITIES BEGAN TO BUILD UP AND HAVE CONTINUED STEADILY SINCE.

C. ONE OF PRINCIPAL SOVIET AIMS IS TO OBTAIN A NAVAL BASE IN GUINEA SO AS TO HAVE SOME SUPPORT POINT ALONG WEST COAST OF AFRICA. SOVIETS CAN BE EXPECTED TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THESE ENDS. AMBASSADOR HAN UNDERSTANDS THAT SOVIETS HAVE ASKED GUINEANS SEVERAL TIMES FOR PERMISSION TO BUILD NAVAL BASE ON TAMARA ISLAND BUT GUINEANS HAVE REFUSED. SOVIETS NOW PLAN TO BUILD PIER AT REQUEST OF GUINEANS. IT CAN BE EXPECTED, HOWEVER, THAT ONCE PIER BUILT AND IN USE, SOVIETS MAY TRY OVER PERIOD OF TIME TO INSTALL PETROLEUM STORAGE DEPOT, POWER PLANT AND OTHER FACILITIES THAT WILL BE NEEDED GRADUALLY TO CONVERT AREA INTO BASE. CONSTRUCTION OF PIER IS REPORTED TO HAVE STARTED SOMETIME AGO BUT TO HAVE STOPPED RECENTLY FOR UNKNOWN REASONS.

D. SOVIET ASSISTANCE FOR BUILDING CONAKRY AIRPORT HAS ALSO REBOUNDED TO SOVIET MILITARY ADVANTAGE. NEXT TO CIVILIAN INSTALLATIONS THERE ARE CUBAN-BUILT MILITARY FACILITIES. SOVIET RECONNAISSANCE PLANES USE CONAKRY AIRPORT FREQUENTLY AND CAN NOW RECEIVE TECHNICAL SERVICES BY SOME SOVIET AND MOSTLY HIGHLY TRAINED CUBAN TECHNICIANS. SINCE SOVIETS BUILT AIRPORT, GUINEA COULD HARDLY NOT ALLOW SOVIETS TO USE IT FOR THEIR PLANES.

E. IN AREA OF MINERAL RESOURCES PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY FOR SOVIETS IS EXPLOITATION OF BAUXITE FROM KINDIA WHICH IS TENDED PRIMARILY FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT RATHER THAN CONTRIBUTION TO GUINEAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

2. AMBASSADOR HAN SAID GUINEANS APPEAR AWARE OF WHAT SOVIETS ARE UP TO AND APPARENTLY WOULD RATHER NOT PLAY SOVIET GAME. HOWEVER GUINEA IN DIFFICULT POSITION. GUINEANS ARE GREATLY CONCERNED ABOUT SECURITY, PARTICULARLY POSSIBLE MILITARY ATTACK FROM PORTUGUESE IN NEIGHBORING TERRITORY. THEY ALSO HAVE SOME FEAR OF POSSIBLE AGGRESSIVE ACTION FROM

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PAGE 03 STATE 118015

SENEGAL AND IVORY COAST. CHINESE HAVE PROVIDED GUINEA WITH SOME MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO HELP THEM DEFEND THEIR INDEPENDENCE. HOWEVER, THIS IS MINIMAL COMPARED TO WHAT SOVIETS HAVE PROVIDED. IF GUINEA-BISSAU BECOMES INDEPENDENT AND PORTUGUESE LEAVE TERRITORY, OBVIOUSLY FEARS WOULD BE GREATLY REDUCED. HOPEFULLY, ALSO WITH NUMEROUS OTHER DEVELOPMENTS, THERE MIGHT BE CHANGE IN ATTITUDES OF IVORY COAST AND SENEGAL WHICH WOULD ELIMINATE FEARS OF ATTACKS FROM THOSE

DIRECTIONS. THIS WOULD ENABLE GUINEA TO RESIST SOVIET PRESSURES AND TO BEGIN TO TAKE STEPS TO DECREASE SOVIET ROLE AND INFLUENCE HERE.

3. AMBASSADOR HAN SAID OTHER GREAT AREA OF GUINEAN WEAKNESS IS ITS INABILITY TO SOLVE PRESSING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, PARTICULARLY IN PROVIDING ENOUGH FOOD FOR PEOPLE. HE APPEALED TO U.S. TO DO WHAT IT COULD TO HELP GUINEA IN THIS REGARD. HE SAID SEKOU TOURE IS NATIONALIST WHO WISHES TO PROTECT GUINEAN SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE. TOURE WOULD BE IN BETTER POSITION TO DO SO IF HIS ECONOMY COULD IMPROVE. CHINESE ARE ALREADY ACTIVE IN AGRICULTURAL AREA AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO WHAT THEY CAN TO INCREASE ASSISTANCE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONSTRUCTION, MILITARY ASSISTANCE, MILITARY BASES, EXPLOITATION (NATURAL RESOURCES), MILITARY PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 JUN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE118015
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EA/PRCM:NBGUENTHER
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740145-1030
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740672/aaaackgi.tel
Line Count: 130
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: CONAKRY 0609 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 APR 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <20 FEB 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: : CHINESE VIEWS ON SOVIET INTERESTS IN GUINEA
TAGS: PFOR, MARR, GV, CH, UR
To: HONG KONG
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005